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*Protecting human rights
in childbirth*
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Registered address:
Birthrights
Union House
111 New Union Street
Coventry CV1 2NT
0300 400 30 400

20th July 2021

Dear Ms Dawson,

In Ms Clarke's absence, I am writing to you on behalf of the human rights in childbirth charity Birthrights, regarding the recent changes you have made to visiting arrangements in maternity services.

You will be aware that all individuals have a right to family and private life under Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights. This right can be restricted but only if the restriction is necessary to achieve a legitimate aim such as protecting the health of others, and crucially if the restriction is proportionate.

Before the pandemic there was already significant evidence about the clinical benefits of women and birthing people being supported by those of their choosing during their maternity care. In addition, we now have over a year's worth of evidence about the adverse impact of visiting restrictions during the pandemic. We would therefore be grateful if you could send us as a matter of urgency the risk assessment/s that underpinned your decision to exclude partners from non-routine scans, and from postnatal wards, showing that this evidence was taken into consideration. Please could you also send us the minutes of any meetings discussing these decisions. Finally, please could you confirm if your local Maternity Services Liaison Committee were involved in the decision making process. Please regard the above as requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

Whilst we understand rising COVID cases and pressures on staffing are creating challenging circumstances, it is crucial that decisions that impact the rights of families are evidence based, and that the consequences of mitigating actions are properly considered through consultation with service users as well as staff.

We look forward to hearing from you as a matter of urgency.

birthrights.org.uk
info@birthrights.org.uk
@birthrightsgorg
Registered charity number 1151152
Patron: Nadine Montgomery

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Yours sincerely,

Maria Booker
Programmes Director - Birthrights

Cc Wendy Clarke - Head of Midwifery & Gynaecology
Paula Boyle - Head of Community Midwifery
Barry Conway - Assistant Director of Acute Services
Claire Hackett - Service User representative

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